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**Title:**

Address to the Printing and Kindred Industries Union Annual Federal Council Meeting

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ADDRESS BY DON DUNSTAN, PREMIER OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA, TO THE  
PRINTING AND KINDRED INDUSTRIES UNION ANNUAL FEDERAL COUNCIL MEETING.

22nd October, 1970.

THE PRINTING TRADE HAS A TRADITION THAT STRETCHES BACK TO 1476, WHEN WILLIAM CAXTON SET UP ENGLAND'S FIRST PRINTING PRESS IN LONDON. SINCE THEN THE PRINTERS' PROFESSION HAS BEEN CHARACTERIZED BY A TRADITION OF CAREFUL CRAFTSMANSHIP AND SKILL.

IN AUSTRALIA, THE FIRST TYPOGRAPHICAL UNIONS WERE FORMED IN NEW SOUTH WALES AND VICTORIA IN THE 1850'S, AND SINCE THEN THE ORGANISATION OF PRINTERS' TRADE EMPLOYEES INTO UNIONS HAS CONTINUED AND EXPANDED. AUSTRALIA'S EARLY COMPOSITORS SOCIETIES WERE IN FACT CONSERVATIVE CRAFT-TYPE UNIONS. THEY WERE MORE CONCERNED WITH THE MAINTENANCE OF TRADITIONAL PRIVILEGES THAN WITH FORMING INDUSTRIAL UNIONS TO FIGHT THE CAUSE OF LABOUR GENERALLY.

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BUT THIS SITUATION CHANGED IN THE LATTER HALF OF THE 19TH CENTURY AND IN THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY, WHEN THE INDUSTRY WAS HIT BY UNEMPLOYMENT, PRESSURES ARISING FROM RAPID TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE, THE GREAT STRIKE OF THE 1890'S, THE CONSCRIPTION CRISIS, INFLATION CAUSED BY THE FIRST WORLD WAR, AND THE STRIKES OF THE 1920'S. BY THE END OF THE 'TWENTIES, WORKERS IN THE PRINTING TRADES WERE HIGHLY UNIONISED, AND WERE WORKING CONSISTENTLY TO IMPROVE THEIR POSITIONS.

HOWEVER, THE SPEED OF ARBITRATION PROCEDURES DOES NOT APPEAR TO HAVE CHANGED VERY MUCH OVER THE YEARS - FOR INSTANCE, IN 1920 THE AMALGAMATED PRINTING TRADES EMPLOYEES BEGAN WHAT PROVED TO BE A VERY LONG STRUGGLE FOR TWO WEEKS PAID ANNUAL LEAVE FOR UNION MEMBERS. ALTHOUGH AT THAT TIME SOME SECTIONS HAD ANNUAL LEAVE, THERE WERE NO OVERALL LEAVE PROVISIONS. AND THE UNION FINALLY ACHIEVED THIS GOAL IN 1936 AFTER A 14 YEAR BATTLE.

SO NOW WE SEE THE PRINTING AND KINDRED INDUSTRIES UNION STILL DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN THE FIGHT FOR BETTER PAY AND CONDITIONS. AT THIS ANNUAL CONFERENCE YOU WILL BE DISCUSSING SUCH VITAL SUBJECTS AS THE INTRODUCTION OF COMPASSIONATE LEAVE IN STATE DETERMINATIONS, THE EXTENSION OF RETIRING ALLOWANCES, AND THE EFFECTS OF THE EXTENSION OF COMPUTER-AIDED TYPESETTING ON THE AUSTRALIAN PRINTING INDUSTRY.

AND OF COURSE IN RECENT YEARS THE UNION HAS BEEN PARTICULARLY CONCERNED WITH THE EFFECTS OF TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE WITHIN THE INDUSTRY.

THE PRINTING AND KINDRED INDUSTRIES UNION WAS THE MAIN INSTIGATOR IN INFLUENCING THE COMMONWEALTH DEPARTMENT OF LABOUR AND NATIONAL SERVICE TO SET UP A NATIONAL PRINTING INDUSTRIES CONFERENCE ON EMPLOYMENT AND TECHNOLOGY, IN WHICH PRINTING UNIONS, EMPLOYERS, AND GOVERNMENT ARE REPRESENTED.

THE WORKING PARTY OF THAT CONFERENCE HAS PLAYED AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE PUBLISHING OF TRAINING PROGRAMMES FOR PRINTING TRADES APPRENTICES FOR USE AT TRADE SCHOOL AND IN THE WORKSHOPS. THE CONFERENCE WAS THE FIRST ESTABLISHED BY THE COMMONWEALTH TO LOOK INTO THE EMPLOYMENT AND TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE PROBLEMS OF AN ENTIRE INDUSTRY, AND THIS, OF COURSE, IS JUST ONE INSTANCE OF THE PROGRESSIVE ATTITUDES, AND THE INTELLIGENT CONCERN FOR ITS MEMBERS, WHICH HAS ALWAYS CHARACTERISED THE UNION.

AS THE FOURTH LARGEST SECONDARY INDUSTRY IN AUSTRALIA, THE PRINTING INDUSTRY PLAYS A VITAL ROLE IN OUR COMMUNITY. WITHOUT EXPERT PRINTERS WE WOULD HAVE NO NEWSPAPERS, BOOKS OR MAGAZINES, NO POSTERS AND NO CARDS. AND IT IS BECAUSE THE PRINTING INDUSTRY PLAYS SUCH AN IMPORTANT ROLE THAT IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT IT SUCCESSFULLY MEETS THE CHALLENGES FACING IT AT PRESENT. THE MAJOR PROBLEMS AT THE MOMENT ARE TECHNOLOGICAL ONES, INCLUDING THE TRANSITION TO THE METRIC SYSTEM AND THE COMPETITION THAT HAS EMERGED RECENTLY FROM SOUTH EAST ASIAN COUNTRIES

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THIS LAST IS A SERIOUS PROBLEM WHICH WILL HAVE TO BE RESOLVED SOON IF PERMANENT DAMAGE TO THE AUSTRALIAN PRINTING INDUSTRY IS TO BE AVOIDED. A GREAT DEAL OF PRINTING WORK HAS ALREADY BEEN LOST TO SOUTH EAST ASIAN PRINTERS WHO, BECAUSE OF LOWER WAGE RATES AND LOWER GENERAL OVERHEAD EXPENSES, CAN PRINT MATERIAL AT A MUCH LOWER PRICE THAN IS POSSIBLE IN AUSTRALIA. STEPS MUST BE TAKEN IN THE FUTURE TO ENSURE THAT LITTLE AUSTRALIAN TRADE IN THIS AREA IS LOST OVERSEAS. AND THE UNION HAS NOT ONLY BEEN CONCERNED WITH THIS LOSS OF WORK, BUT IT HAS ALREADY LOOKED AT THE STATUS OF WORKERS IN SOUTH EAST ASIAN COUNTRIES. IT IS IN CONTACT WITH PRINTING UNIONS IN SINGAPORE, DJAKARTA AND INDIA REGARDING THE FEASIBILITY OF FORMING A SOUTH EAST ASIAN GRAPHICAL FEDERATION. I HOPE THAT THE RESOLUTIONS OF THIS FEDERAL COUNCIL WILL GO A LONG WAY TOWARDS RESOLVING SUCH PROBLEMS FACING THE INDUSTRY.

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IF THE UNION'S PAST RECORD IS ANYTHING TO GO BY, I'M SURE YOU'LL COME UP WITH SOME REALLY WORTHWHILE ANSWERS TO SUCH INDUSTRIAL PROBLEMS. AND THEREFORE I AM VERY PLEASED TO DECLARE THIS MEETING OPEN.